

Francois Adam
Radio Speech
November 23, 1944

Tonight, I want you to share with me some of the adventures and reminiscences of a very remarkable man, Mr. Francois Adam, now of Edmonton, but late of Duhamel. . . . the settlement on the Battle River near Camrose. Mr. Adam came to this western country in 1884, and since that time has lived a remarkably interesting life But here are some of his own stories: /

After spending three years in the North, I got married/ and thinking that the life so far north should be too hard on a young girl, I located my headquarters at Duhamel, still keeping several fur posts in the north.

Duhamel in those days was known as Battle River Crossing. Later on, the Bishop Duhamel of Ottawa/ gave us the bell for our church and we gave his name to the settlement.

Duhamel was then, the fourth largest settlement in what is today the Province of Alberta. It consisted of 64 houses/ and a small store kept by Billy McDonell. Only Fort Macleod, Fort Saskatchewan, and St. Albert had larger populations. / The policemen were not dispersed all over the country / as they are today, so there were about 60 in garrison at Fort Macleod and Fort Saskatchewan/ which gave more importance to those two places.

Edmonton was a kind of warehouse/distributing the goods to the Hudson's Bay posts, and receiving the fur from them. But there were only 12 houses there.

Calgary also had only a few houses; it was only after the building of the railroad north and south from it/that a settlement was started. We thought that Gleichen, then called Blackfoot Crossing, would have been the town of the south.

The parish of Duhamel was in the charge of Father Bellivaire. I have never seen a better congregation anywhere in the world, and many were well endowed with worldly goods. | The importance of a man consisted in the number of Red River carts he owned. Some of the half-breeds of Duhamel had as many as 150, and the owner of less than 25 had no consideration. |

With the freight in summer and the fur in winter, the half-breeds had a very good time. They were as happy as man could be. Several of them had over 100 head of cattle and horses, but after the railroad line was built between Calgary and Edmonton in 1891-92, (there was no more freighting, and it didn't take many years for the half-breeds to become destitute and to disperse all over the country. //

But more about Father Bellivairé . . . One time, when I was on a trip buying fur, I came to a ^{So To} Sauteux Indian lodge and, stopping to find out if they had some skins to sell, I saw a young woman \about 25 years of age/, consumptive to the last ^{year} gap. When I returned home, I told Father Bellivaire about the girl. | I also told him that she was not a Christian, but

if he thought he should see her, I would change the horses and drive him to the camp. The Father thought he should go, adding "In my life, I have seen several people to open their eyes to the last moment of their life."

When we reached the tepee, Father Bellivaire explained to the girl in a succinct way, the Christian faith: How the Lord was born; Why He was born; how He died, and the reason for it.

The girl never said a word until the Father had ended, then the following conversation took place:

The Girl: Where was that good man living?

Father: In the Old Country.

The Girl: When?

Father: Nearly 2000 years ago.

The Girl: How long ago did the white men discover this country?

Father: About 500 years ago.

Then after a long pause, the Girl said, "Before that time we had no intercourse with the people of the Old Country. You didn't know that we even existed. I understand that you who killed such a good man have to pray, but we have nothing to do with that. He surely didn't come for us."

With such reasoning, Father Bellivaire said no more, but stayed with the girl until she died.

Father Bellivaire was, in his own way, a distinct character.

One time some one sent word to ~~Father Bellivaire~~ ^{him} that a man was sick. To save time, I harnessed the father's horse. He came with a long switch, stepped in the old buckboard and, standing with

the reins in his left hand, gave a good beating to the horse.

I couldn't imagine the reason for this beating so asked,

"What has the horse done, Father?"

"Nothing," replied the Father, "but now he knows I got a switch, he will run as if his tail was afire and I won't have to touch him any more."

At the time of the Rebellion, Father Bellivaire saved the lives of forty policemen who had been sent to arrest three men of Duhamel: Gabriel Dumont, Toussiant Salway, and Alexander Mokomanis (Small-Knife). The half-breeds must have expected them as they had spys on the roads converging from the settlement.

When word came that the police were on their way, all the wanted men left to hide in the valley of the Stony Creek at the northeast end of the village. The police reached the place soon after the men had departed. Police searched every house, asking for the wanted men. Everywhere they received the same answer:

"They got word from Frog Lake two days ago that the fight had started and they all went there."

The police believed the folk and went back to camp at Bittern Lake about twelve miles from Duhamel.

After supper this day, Father Bellivaire began to wonder why the half-breeds had not come back home. Some boys had been sent out to tell them the coast was clear and they had had plenty of time to return. Becoming worried, Father Bellivaire jumped on his horse, crossed the Battle River, and about two miles farther north he met the half-breeds on the war path.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Some of us have spied the Police. We know that they are camping at Bittern Lake. The moon will not show up tonight. It is going to be dark and we are going to cut the picket ropes of their horses and as the men come out of their tent, we will slaughter them" ^{That} was the answer. //

The Father told the half-breeds that there was no doubt but what they could kill all the police encamped at Bittern Lake, but that they should think of the consequences. "It is craziness to try to fight the Government, for one man that you and the Indians could put in the ^{Field} ~~field~~, the Government will have many hundreds with better arms and more ammunition than they need. / The small amount of ammunition which you obtained in sacking the store of Billy McDonell will only last a few days, and you will be compelled to surrender. If you kill those policemen, as sure as I am speaking to you now, no one of you will have his head on his shoulders in a few weeks from now. / You must think first of your wives and children." //

He then took the half-breeds back home, and told their families not to let them out of their sight that night. /

Many times after / some of the band of half-breeds told me, "What a carnage we would have made of those policemen if that little priest had not stopped us." I always answered them as Father Bellivaire had, "If you had done so, you wouldn't be here to tell me. You would be rotting under the sod!" //

Father Bellivaire had quite a sense of humor, and his greatest fun was to play innocent tricks on white people as well as the Indians.

At the time that the gramophone was in its infancy, Father Bellivaire made a trip to France and brought back a machine with a supply of recorded cylinders and the attachment to make his own records.

On one of these cylinders he had recorded in Cree the well known carol: He is born, the Divine Child. One day, Father Bellivaire knew that the Indians were going to pay him a visit, / so / he sat the gramophone as far under the bed as he could. At the foot of the bed / was a small table on which he always had a small board / with a big knife and a plug of T.B. tobacco. (He tied the end of a string to the primer of the gramophone, and the other end under the tobacco board. When the Indians came, they squatted on the floor, and after talking for some time, Father went to the little table to fill up his pipe and to pull the string. / He had been careful not to start the record near the edge of the cylinder so that he would have time to return to his chair and take part in the conversation. /

Then the song started: Sasay Manitoo Owasis
Bethlehem eke - gi - kaw.

You should have seen the faces of those Indians stretching their necks to look all over the room. / Some went outside to see if the noise was coming from there. / One of the old Indians opined that it must come from the angels singing to the Lord. When Father Bellivaire had enjoyed enough of his farce, he asked if one of the Indians could sing. One said he could sing the Crane → the favorite song of the Cree Indians. //

The Father took the gramophone from under the bed, fixed the recording attachment and told the Indian to sing the Crane / in the

funnel while he turned the crank. So the Crane was recorded. To have tried to give them an explanation any other way would have been a waste of time. //

One morning when our baby was only a few days old, I sent word to Father Bellivaire to bring over a squaw to help out my wife until she felt stronger. He came with two squaws and all their children. They set up their tepee and started their fire on which they put a kettle full of fagots of twigs or roots and water. These they stewed for about two hours, then they gave the liquid to my wife to drink. It worked a charm, for in no time she felt fine and strong again. | But the Indians stayed on. ↗

A few days later, | I heard the squaws lamenting, "Wha-wha. Wha-Whu." I went out to ask them what was the matter.

"Thine papoos very sick," they answered.

"Why," I said, "the baby doesn't look sick to me. Do you know what is the matter with him?"

"Yes, a bad sickness. He has the jaundice."

"Have you a remedy for that?" I asked.

"Yes, we are going to give him a louse to swallow."

You can imagine how I felt to have to go tell my wife what the squaws were going to do, but I knew there was no stopping them.

When I told her she said, "No louse for my baby. He isn't sick any way."

"Well, Laura," I said, "We must be careful. If those squaws get angry and leave, we would be very sorry."

"All right, then," she answered, "take a soup spoon with water in it and tell them to put the louse in the spoon. Be sure you bring it back yourself."

When I went out to the tent, one of the squaws had the head of a little girl between her knees hunting for the animal and she put it in the spoon. As soon as I was in the house and the door shut behind me, my wife told me to throw spoon and louse into the fire.

There is an interesting aftermath to this story. Every year after disposing of my fur in London, I would go on to Belgium to buy my drygoods and to visit my brother and members of the family. On one of my visits, I went to call on some old folk whose family had been on our farm for generations. There I found old Kate in her arm chair having a ^{REST} ~~rest~~ well earned after many years of hard work. In telling her news of this country I asked her, "Kate, do you know what those Indians gave my baby for jaundice?"

Without hesitation she answered, "Yes, they gave him a louse." I could not believe my ears. But about ten years ago when I was visiting my daughter in Red Deer, I found a book written by a Scandinavian doctor. This doctor who had practiced for several years in Paris decided to retire to a villa in Italy and took up as a hobby the search for remedies used by the primitive peoples. And in this book he reported that while

visiting the Lapps, he found they were using a louse to cure the jaundice.

And even last summer a gentleman from Eastern Canada was visiting me at my cottage at Jackfish Lake. I related to him the tale about the louse. "Well," he said, "when I was young, I had the jaundice, and they gave me some lice, but mine were boiled!"

I am still wondering how ~~Such~~ a queer remedy could have been known in so many places and so far apart.

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Radio Mv.

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After spending three years in the North, I got married and thinking that the life so far North should be too hard on a young girl, I located my headquarters at Duhamel, still keeping several fur posts in the North.

Duhamel in those days was known as Battle River Crossing. Later on the Bishop Duhamel of Ottawa gave us the bell for our church and we gave his name to the settlement.

Duhamel was then the fourth largest settlement in what is today the Province of Alberta. It consisted of 64 houses and a small store kept by Billy McDonell. Only Fort Macleod, Fort Saskatchewan, and St. Albert had larger populations. The policemen were not dispersed all over the country as they are today. There were about 60 in garrison at Fort Macleod and Fort Saskatchewan which gave more importance to those two places.

Edmonton was a kind of warehouse distributing the goods to the Hudson's Bay posts, and receiving the fur from them. But there were only 12 houses there.

Calgary also had only a few houses; it was only after the building

of the railroad north and south from it that a settlement was started. We thought that Gleichen, then called Blackfoot Crossing would have been the town of the south.

The parish of Duhamel was in ^{the} charge of Father Bellivaire.

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The importance of a man consisted in the number of Red River carts he owned. Some of those half-breeds had as many as 150, and the owner of less than 25 had no consideration.

With the freight in summer and the fur in winter, the half-breeds had a very good time. They were as happy as man could be. Several of them had over 100 head of cattle and horses, but after the railroad line was built between Calgary and Edmonton in 1891-92, there was no freight any more, and it didn't take many years for the half-breeds to become destitute and to disperse all over the country.

One time when I was on a trip buying fur, I came to a Sauteux Indian lodge and stopping to find out if they had some skins to sell, I saw a young woman about 25 years of age, consumptive to the last gasp. When I came back home, I told Father Bellivaire about the girl. I also told him that she was not a christian but if he thought he should see her, I would change the horses and drive him there. The father thought he should go, adding, "In my life, I have seen several people to open their eyes to the last moment of their life."

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The Girl: How long ago did the white men discover this country?

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The Girl after a long pause: Before that time we had no intercourse with the people of the Old Country. You didn't know that we even existed. I understand that you who killed such a good man have to pray, but we have nothing to do with that. He surely didn't come for us.

Another time, some one sent word to Father Bellivair that a man was sick. To save time, I harnessed the father's horse. He came with a long switch, stepped in the old buckboard and, standing with the reins in his left hand, gave a good beating to the horse. I couldn't imagine the reason for it, so I asked:

"What has he done, Father?"

"Nothing," replied the Father, "but now he knows I got a switch, he will run as if his tail was afire and I won't have to touch him any more."

At the time of the Rebellion, Father Bellivair saved the lives of 40 policemen who had been sent to arrest 3 men of Duhamel:

Gabriel Dumont, Toussiant Salway and Alexander Mokomanis (Small-Knife)

The halfbreeds must have expected them. They had spys on the roads converging from the settlement and they found out that the policemen were coming. All the wanted men left to hide in the valley of the Stony Creek at the northeast end of the village. The police reached the place after the men had all gone. They searched every house, asking for the men. Everywhere they received the same answer: "They got word from Frog Lake two days ago that the fight had started and they all went there."

The police took their word for it and went back to camp at Bittern Lake about 12 miles from Duhamel.

After Father Bellivaire had had his supper that day, he was wondering why the half-breeds were not coming home. Some boys had been sent to tell them to come back and they had had plenty of time to do so.

So the Father jumped on his horse, crossed the Battle River, and about two miles farther north he met the half-breeds on the war path.

"Where are you going?" asked the Father.

"Some of us have spied the policemen. We know that they are camping at Bittern Lake. The moon will not show up. It is going to be dark and we are going to cut the picket ropes of their horses and as the policemen come out of their tent, we will slaughter them."

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the Indians could put in the field, the Government will have many hundreds with better arms and more ammunition than they need. The small amount of ammunition which you obtained in sacking the store of Billy McDonell will only last a few days, and you will be compelled to surrender. If you kill those policemen, as sure as I speak to you now, no one of you will have his head on his shoulders in a few weeks from now. You must think first of your wives and children."

He took the halfbreeds back home and told their families not to let them go out that night.

Several time some of them told me, "What a carnage we would have made of those policemen if that little priest had not stopped us." I always answered them as Father Bellivaire had, "If you had done so, you wouldn't be here to tell me. You would be rotting under the sod!"

When Father Bellivaire was middle aged, his greatest fun was to play innocent tricks on white people as well as Indians.

At the time that the gramophone was in its infancy, Father Bellivaire made a trip to France and brought one back with a great number of cylinders. Some of them with records on it and some which had not been used. He also had the attachment to transmit records on the fresh cylinders. It was a kind of big funnel to sing or speak in while turning the crank.

On one of these cylinders, he had recorded in Cree the well known carol: He is born, the Divine Child. One day, Father Bellivaire knew the Indians were going to visit him, so he sat the gramophone as far as he could under his bed. At the foot of the bed was a

small table on which he always had a small board with a big knife and a plug of T.B. tobacco. Then he tied the end of a string to the primer of the gramophone, and the other end under the tobacco board. When the Indians came, they squatted on the floor, and after speaking for some time, Father went to the little table to fill up his pipe and to pull on the string. He had been carefull not to start the record near the edge of the cylinder so that he would have time to return to his chair and take part in the conversation.

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The Father took the gramophone from under the bed, fixed the attachment and told the Indian to sing the Crane in the big funnel while he was turning the crank. So the Crane was recorded. To try to have given them an explanation any other way would have been a loss of time.

The freight by cars having been killed by the construction of the railroad line between Calgary and Edmonton, I had to take cattle in payment of my goods from the half-breeds and the few white settlers there at the time.

In the summer of 1892, we were making hay at the east end of Crooked Lake where Swynne Station is today.

when her baby was only a few days old.
One morning my wife told me that she felt as if she was going to be sick. I sent word to Father Bellivair by one of my cowboys. He came with 2 squaws and their children. Often they had put up their tents at our place. When they came they brought fagots of twigs or roots. These they stewed about two hours, then they gave the liquid to my wife to drink. It worked a charm. A short time after, she felt fine again.

Three days later, I heard the squaws lamenting, "Wha-wha. wha-whu." I went out the house to ask them what was the matter.

"Thine papoos very sick," they answered.

"Well," I said, "the baby doesn't look sick to me. Do you know what is the matter with him?"

"Yes, a bad sickness. He has the jaundice."

"Have you a remedy for that," I asked.

"Yes, we are going to give them a louse to swallow."

I hated to go in and tell my wife what the squaws were going to do, but there was no stopping them.

When I told her, she said. "No louse for my baby. I don't believe he's sick at all."

"Well, Laura," I said, "We must be careful. If those squaws get angry and leave us, we would be very sorry."

"All right, then, " she answered, "take a soup spoon with water in .

it and tell them to put the louse in the spoon. Be sure to bring it back yourself."

When I went out of the house, one of the squaws had the head of a little girl between her knees hunting for the animal and she put one in the spoon. Entering the house my wife told me to throw the whole thing in the fire.

There is an interesting aftermath to this story. Every year after disposing of my fur in London, I would go on to Belgium to see my brother and to buy more drygoods there. While in Belgium, I went to see a family which had been on our farm for generations.

There I found old Kate, in her arm chair having a rest well earned after many years of hard labor. In telling her news of this country, I asked her, "Do you know, Kate, what those Indians gave my baby for jaundice?"

Without hesitation she answered, "Yes, they gave him a louse."

I could not believe my ears. But about ten years ago when I was visiting my daughter in Red Deer, I found a book written by a Scandinavian doctor. In this book the doctor who had practiced for several years in Paris, decided to retire to a villa in Italy and took up as a hobby the search for remedies used by the uneducated and primitive peoples. And he reported in this book that while visiting the Lapps, he found they were using a louse for jaundice.

Last summer a gentleman from Eastern Canada was visiting me at my cottage at Jackfish Lake. I related to him the tale about the louse. "Well, he said, "when I was young, I had the jaundice, and they gave me some lice, but mine were boiled!"

I am still wondering how such a queer remedy could have been known in so many places and so far apart.

But this outward beauty means little to the Indians. They see much more in the Writing-on-Stone country in Southeastern Alberta than scenic beauty.

Once upon a time -- according to the story written upon the sides of the rocks-- a band of Indians set out on a buffalo hunt. They were successful in their expedition, for buffalo were thick, but during the chase ~~they~~ ^{the hunters} were overtaken by a fierce prairie blizzard. The wind and snow roared out of the north and they wandered for days lost in the storm. Fearful that death would soon overtake them they wrote their tragic story upon the rocks. Then they ~~passed away~~ ^{died}.

Later a search party set out to find the missing buffalo hunters. ^{The Party} ~~They~~ passed "Writing-on-Stone", where from their place in the Happy Hunting Ground, the spirits of the hunters saw them. Vainly they tried to penetrate the veil between them and their mortal brothers. The search party halted to read the story but hearing and seeing nothing more passed on across the valley and were soon lost from view.

Thus goes the story, or one **version** of it, and no matter what the curious tourist may say, the writing is there and it has been pronounced genuine by students of the picture writing of the Blackfoot tribes.

There is a land -- the Land of Painted Rocks -- where the spirits of departed Indians abide. They hover over the scenes of ages past where their forefathers fought, feasted, worshipped, celebrated and passed into the Happy Hunting ground. And even to this day when twilight falls over the quiet, brooding prairie and the Sweetgrass Hills loom like giant guardians of the plains, the ghosts of the past return whispering across the Great Divide to the redmen of today camping by ~~the~~ rocks molded and painted by strange hands.

All this may be poetic fancy to the white men ~~of the "Land of Painted Rocks"~~ but not so to the Indians of that land situated some 35 miles east of Milk River, on the Alberta-Montana boundary south of Lethbridge. To the ^{Indian} aborigines of the plains, remnants of ^{the} that powerful Blackfoot confederacy, ^{terror} of the Northwest, ^e ^{especially} this region around "Writing-on-Stone" is holy ground. For there on the rocks chiseled by some bronzed artist -- a hand skilled in picture writing -- is the story of an ~~epochal~~ incident in the mythology of the tribesmen, an incident that happened countless moons ago, but which is vividly recounted around the campfire.

The Writing-on-Stone country is a remarkable region. There the Milk River sandstone has been used by nature as material for some weird and fantastic sculpture. The rocks are formed in innumerable striking shapes: Chinese temples, minarets, spires, and such a queer medley of formations that it is called by the cowpunchers and homesteaders "Chinatown". ~~An effort is now being made to have the area, the beauty of which is enhanced by the nearby Sweetgrass hills, set apart as a provincial park.~~

When the sunlight plays on these rocks the scene is magnificent for they are painted indeed, painted with a thousand varying shades, the whole making a picture of arresting beauty.